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RTD TODAY

Resources and Technology Division
Economic Research Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC

A newsletter for employees
and colleagues of RTD

APRIL-MAY 1991

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

It is great to be back in RTD after sixteen months as Executive Coordinator of the Secretary's Policy Coordination Council and Special Assistant to Deputy Secretary Parnell. It was both a challenging and rewarding opportunity to address the coordination and implementation of critical cross-cutting issues in the Department, observe the operation of the Department from another perspective, and work closely with other Agencies. Hopefully this experience will help us develop even stronger research and data programs, and get our analytical results incorporated into the decision making process.

I have been meeting individually with the Branch Chiefs and staff in the Office of the Director to exchange ideas about where we are in RTD. I am also attempting to visit with Division staff to get their ideas about current issues and problems.

We are planning a retreat for the Division management staff June 23-25. At that time, I will share my reflections on this information-gathering phase along with my thoughts about future directions in the Division. At our last retreat in November 1988, we identified water quality, trade and policy reform, and technology as areas of cross-Division focus. I am especially pleased to see the staff work and manuscripts, especially the six monographs in the technology area, scheduled for publication. This is a considerable accomplishment when we reflect on where we were two years ago.

The issue areas we have identified for the June retreat are food safety, global change, and water quality. Food safety and global change have emerged as significant new areas of responsibility for RTD over the last year. Our role in water quality has evolved since 1988, with the addition of major responsibilities in the President's Water Quality Initiative.

Another important agenda item for discussion at the retreat is Workforce Diversity. Ben Alexander, a training consultant who conducted a successful RTD workshop on Managing Cultural Diversity in February, will return for a second workshop. I support enthusiastically the USDA commitment to the area of Workforce Diversity. The March Workshop on New Ideas in Professional Opportunities for Women and Minorities in ERS was an important milestone, and we are following through on recommendations from the discussion groups at the Workshop.

I am enthusiastic about rejoining you in addressing the challenges that are ours. New mountains to scale provide fascinating opportunities to demonstrate the strengths of RTD!


JOHN A. MIRANOWSKI

FOOTNOTE: RTD Branch and other units are abbreviated in this letter, as follows:

Office of the Director (OD), Agricultural Inputs and Production Systems Branch (AI&PS), Land and Capital Assets Branch (L&CA), Resource Policy Branch (RP), Water Branch (W), and Resource Indicators Branch (RI).

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

RTD INVOLVEMENT WITH CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM CONTINUES

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) was authorized by Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985. Since then it has been the centerpiece of USDA's agricultural conservation efforts. Nationally, 33.9 million acres of highly erodible or environmentally sensitive cropland were idled by the Program during 1986-1990. Most recently, the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 extended CRP enrollment through 1995. In the first signup to be held under the extended enrollment authority, a little more than .5 million acres were added to the Reserve.

Since the CRP began, RTD researchers have analyzed options for program implementation, assessed the program's economic effects, and examined options for the future. Also, RTD economists have monitored the progress of the CRP, maintained an electronic database available to the public, and published a series of ERS Statistical Bulletins. The most recent Statistical Bulletin, The Conservation Reserve Program: Enrollment Statistics for Signup Periods 1-9 and Fiscal Year 1989, (SB 811), by Tim Osborn, Felix Llacuna, and Michael Linsenbigler, presents regional and State information on acres enrolled, acres planted to trees, acres of wetland, rental payments, erosion reductions, commodity base reduction, and conservation practices installed.

Early research by Michael Dicks and Katherine Reichelderfer in Choices for Implementing the Conservation Reserve, (AIB 507), examined impacts of making various lands eligible for enrollment, setting area acreage allotments, and selecting bids based on various criteria. They found that program performance depended more on implementation than on the actual number of acres enrolled in the program. Other research by Dicks identified an important inconsistency between eligibility criteria for the CRP and land subject to the conservation compliance provision. Ultimately, CRP eligibility was revised.

Clayton Ogg, Marcel Aillery, and Marc Ribauda analyzed CRP benefits and costs resulting from the inclusion of different categories of environmentally sensitive cropland in Implementing the Conservation Reserve Program: Analysis of Environmental Options, (AER 618). Enrolling erodible cropland in watersheds with pollution problems and cropped wetlands was found to be most effective in increasing the net benefits of the CRP. Alternatively, it was concluded that enrolling irrigated land in areas of groundwater depletion or with salinity problems would result in significant environmental benefits, but at high costs since most irrigated land is highly productive.

Marc Ribauda, Daniel Colacicco, Linda Langner, Steven Piper, and Glen Schiabe estimated the value of CRP benefits to surface water quality, soil productivity, air quality, wildlife habitat, and groundwater supplies in Natural Resources and Users Benefit from the Conservation Reserve Program, (AER 627). They found that a 45 million acre CRP could generate \$6-\$14 billion in natural resource and environmental benefits. Most of the benefits resulted from expansion of wildlife habitat and improved surface water quality.

In The Conservation Reserve Program: An Economic Assessment, (AER 626), RTD researchers Edwin Young and Tim Osborn reported an overall economic assessment of the CRP which drew on work done by several RTD researchers. Results of this analysis, done before the 1988 drought, indicated that the partial net economic benefits of a 45 million acre CRP would range from \$3.4 - \$11.0 billion in present value. Net government costs for the program were estimated at \$2.0 - \$6.6 billion.

In an updated analysis, **A Fresh Look at the CRP**, Agricultural Outlook, (August 1990), Tim Osborn and Kazim Konyar reestimated the effects of the CRP in light of the 1990 level of enrollment and the commodity price impacts stemming from the uneven weather of the past few years. Their analysis indicated that a 34 million acre CRP could produce net economic benefits within the range previously estimated. However, net government outlays were estimated to be higher, mainly because drought-induced price increases lessened potential commodity program savings that might otherwise have been attributed to the CRP.

RTD economists have also analyzed factors influencing CRP participation. In **A National-Level Economic Analysis of Conservation Reserve Program Participation: A Discrete Choice Approach**, Journal of Agricultural Economics Research, (1990), Konyar and Osborn found that farm tenure, farm size, land value, farmer age, erosion rate, and expected net returns with and without participation, influenced the probability of CRP participation. They also found that farmers were more responsive to changes in returns from crop production than in changes in returns from CRP participation. Consequently, if returns from crop production increase, CRP rental payments must increase by proportionally more to maintain enrollment rates.

More recently, as part of the Departmental reimplementation of the CRP under the 1990 Farm Bill, RTD researchers were asked to develop an improved bid acceptance process. The process, which began use with the March 1991 signup, is designed to select acres that provide the greatest conservation and environmental benefits relative to the Government costs of enrollment. The process also promotes rental rate competition between farmers and complies with legislative requirements by insuring that CRP rental payments do not exceed prevailing local rents for comparable land.

Future RTD research on the CRP is focusing on the fate of CRP land following contract expiration. Early work done by Ralph Heimlich in connection with the Grazing Lands Forum and later with Olaf Kula in, **Grasslands: The Future of CRP Land After Contracts Expire**, Journal of Production Agriculture, (1990), concluded that no more than 20 percent of the land enrolled in the CRP is likely to remain in grass. They proposed three sets of factors that will influence landowner decisions for CRP land: long-term relative economics of crop and livestock production; direct and indirect incentives in existing and proposed agricultural policy; and the characteristics of CRP landowners. RTD researchers Ralph Heimlich and Tim Osborn will be conducting additional research as members of a newly created task force of the Great Plains Agricultural Council investigating the future use of CRP lands.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

RTD had lead responsibility for an ERS workshop, "New Ideas in Professional Opportunities for Women and Minorities in ERS", held this spring. The Division has responded to a number of specific suggestions that were made by Workshop discussion groups.

Representatives from 22 colleges, universities, and professional organizations were invited to interact with ERS and USDA staff on employment and educational opportunities in ERS. John Miranowski welcomed participants to the workshop and focused his remarks on the importance of a diversified workplace. Assistant Secretary for Administration, Adis Vila, and Assistant Secretary for Economics, Bruce Gardner, discussed USDA's Workforce Diversity Initiative and workforce diversity policy within the Economics agencies. Ivery Clifton, University of Georgia; Jean Due, University of Illinois; and Dewitt Jones, Southern University, discussed "Workforce Diversity and the University." Alyce Bassoff, Director of the Personnel Division, Economics Management Staff reviewed existing programs and employment opportunities at ERS.

RTD Deputy Director Betsey Kuhn presented two new proposals, **Co-ops for Action**, directed to graduate students, and an intern program for undergraduates. Three African-American economists Kevin Ingram, Eugene Lomax, and Kenneth Robinson, offered their personal views of their work experience in the Resources and Technology Division at ERS.

On the second day of the Workshop, the participants were divided into smaller discussion groups and the views and suggestions of the university representatives were solicited. Many valuable suggestions were received. John Lee and John Miranowski offered concluding comments and re-emphasized the Agency's commitment to developing long-term relationships with Workshop participants.

Several suggestions have already been implemented. RTD increased the number of summer interns and expanded the benefits provided to the interns. The proportion of women and minorities in this group also has increased. A mentoring system based on Dean Annette Kolodney's "buddy" system developed at the University of Arizona was put into effect for the summer interns. Another outgrowth of the Workshop are current negotiations on participation in the National Consortium for Educational Access, Inc. We also are negotiating Cooperative Educational Agreements with Fort Valley State College and South Carolina State College. ERS is developing new recruitment brochures and as mentioned earlier RTD management staff are receiving training on cultural diversity.

FOOD SAFETY

RTD and the Commodity Economics Division (CED) are jointly sponsoring a Food Safety Seminar Series. A range of topics dealing with the economics of food safety, including the costs and benefits of alternative pest control practices, the economic costs of human health risks from microbial and chemical sources, evaluation of regulatory options, and consumer risk perceptions and willingness to pay for food safety, will be covered. To date, James Hamitt, The RAND Corporation, discussed the **Value of Information Methods for Settling Research Priorities: An Application to Food Safety**; Young Sook Eom, North Carolina State University, **Consumers' Preferences for Food Safety: The Case of Pesticide Residues**; and Walter Milon, University of Florida, **Consumers' Shellfish Safety Perceptions and Consumer Behavior**. Tanya Roberts (CED) and Betsey Kuhn (RTD) are co-chairing the Series.

WATER QUALITY

An external review team that included William Boggess, University of Florida; Susan Capalbo, Montana State University; Otto Doering, Purdue University; Richard Howitt, University of California, Davis; Tim Phipps, West Virginia University; Tony Prato, University of Missouri, Columbia; and Kathy Segerson, University of Connecticut met with RTD's Water Quality Team at Airlie, Virginia to comment on plans underway for the President's Water Quality Initiative.

Comments and suggestions covered six areas: technology assessment, farm level behavior, area studies, aggregate modeling, environmental effects assessment, and program administration. The Water Quality Team is responsible for leading the economic evaluation of Federal policies under the President's Initiative to address agricultural sources of nonpoint source water pollution.

ERS ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE AND AWARDS CEREMONY

The 30th Anniversary of ERS and the Administrator's 12th Special Merit Awards were celebrated at an Economics and Public Service Conference on April 4, at the D.C. Convention Center. RTD recipients of the Administrator's Superior Service Award included:

Ralph Heimlich	For research and communication on the role of agriculture and agricultural policy in wetland preservation.
Rachel Evans	For sustained excellence in support of the productivity measurement project.
Michael Moore	For excellence in developing and sustaining a policy-relevant research program on the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.
Dave Ervin and Tim Osborn (Farm Bill Team)	For outstanding team effort in providing analytical support for the Farm Bill.

Former Secretary of Agriculture, Orville Freeman, was the guest speaker for the luncheon which included former Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Directors for Economics, Agency Administrators, and current Departmental officials. Secretary Madigan expressed his support for the future of economics work in the agency.

A concurrent session at the Conference dealt with **Resource Economics** and was moderated by Larry Libby, University of Florida, with papers by former Natural Resource Division Director, Melvin Cotner, and Bill Heneberry, RTD retiree, and Pierre Crosson, Resources For the Future. In a session, **The Agency Workplace: Where It's Been, Where It's Going**, Rachel Evans, a Statistical Assistant in RTD's Resource Indicators Branch, and Linda Stallard, a former Secretary in the Natural Resource Economics Division, were on a panel discussing the evolution of support roles in ERS. Publication of the conference proceedings is planned.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT WORKSHOP TAPE

At the 1990 AAEA Meetings in Vancouver, the Committee on Women in Agricultural Economics (CWAE) sponsored a workshop on sexual harassment in the workplace. Through support from RTD, an edited videotape of the CWAE workshop is now available. The tape is not to be used for instructional purposes, or in place of harassment training, but it can serve as an introduction to issues regarding male/female interaction in the work place. Use of the tape can be arranged through Ann Vandeman of the Resource Indicators Branch. RTD did follow up last fall by inviting the presenter, Jan Salisbury, to conduct a day-long workshop on sexual harassment for supervisors and managers at ERS.

PEOPLE

Welcome to...

- Douglas Beach (AI&PS), formerly with EXXON USA, who joined the Agricultural Chemicals and Risk Assessment Section.
- Sylvia Canada (OD), formerly with the County of Fairfax, who joined the Director's Office as an Office Automation Assistant.
- Margriet Caswell (RI), formerly Assistant Professor, University of California at Santa Barbara, who became Leader, Agricultural Research and Technology Assessment Section.
- Tracy Dunbar (W), M.S. in Agricultural Economics from Pennsylvania State University, who joined the Environmental Quality Valuation Section.
- Barbara Gilmartin (OD), who joined the Director's Office as a Secretary.
- Joel Greene (RI), M.A. in International Affairs from George Washington University, who joined the Resource Measurement and Productivity Section.
- Biing-Hwan Lin (AI&PS), formerly Associate Professor at the University of Idaho, who joined the Agricultural Chemicals and Risk Assessment Section.
- J.R. Massey (OD), formerly with the State of Maryland, who joined the Director's Office as an Office Automation Assistant.
- John Michos (L&CA), M.A. in Economics from George Mason University, who joined the Land Ownership Section.

- Linda Nodine (RP), M.S. in Agricultural Economics from Rutgers University, who joined the Technology Policy Section.
- Kenneth Robinson (OD), M.S. in Public Policy from the University of Texas, who joined the Director's Office.
- Marca Weinberg (RP), Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the University of California at Davis, who joined the Environmental and Regulatory Policy Section.
- David Westenbarger (RI), M.S. in Economics from Ohio University, who joined the Agricultural Research and Technology Assessment Section.

Appointment Changes...

- Fred Kuchler (L&CA), Leader, Asset Values Section is serving as Acting Chief of the Land and Capital Assets Branch.
- Michael LeBlanc (RI), has been named Chief of the Resource Indicators Branch.

Farewell to...

- Eugene Lomax (RI), who accepted a research assistant position with the Federal Reserve Bank in New York.
- John McClelland (RI), who transferred to the USDA Office of Energy.
- Donald Negri (W), who accepted a position as Assistant Professor, Willamette University, Salem, Oregon.
- Parveen Setia (W), who transferred to the Commodities Economics Division.
- Matthew Spilker (AI&PS), who accepted a research position at the University of Nebraska.

Congratulations to...

- Jorge Fernandez (AI&PS), who received the Allan P. Colburn Prize for the best dissertation in the field of Mathematical Sciences and Engineering at the University of Delaware.

PUBLICATIONS

(October 1990 - May 1991)

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